

**Open Government Status: Partially open**

**Intranet embargo: Part of Annex 1 of the public version of this paper contains a section that is withheld under Exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information – ‘information that would cause unwarranted invasion of personal privacy’.**

**Paper Number: ACTS/41/2002**  
**Meeting Date: 21 November 2002**  
**Type of paper: Above the line**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

**Finalisation of the Chemical Trends Forward Look for 2004 and beyond**

**Issue**

1 The HSC needs strategic advice from expert committees on the scientific and technological trends and developments it should take into account in developing its strategic plans for 2004 and beyond.

**Timing**

2 ACTS needs to finalise the list of emerging issues for the HSC on future priorities for the regulation of toxic substances in the workplace by January 2003.

**Recommendation**

3 ACTS members are invited to consider and agree the revised forward look at Annex 2.

**Background**

4 As part of its work to formulate a new forward looking strategic plan for 2004 and beyond, the HSC has asked its advisory committees to participate in a horizon scanning review. The HSC needs expert advice on the future science and technology trends it needs to take into account in developing its future strategic plans. The HSC has therefore asked its existing Subject Advisory Committees dealing with science and health issues to produce forward looks to help develop priorities relevant to their subject areas. The forward look should cover a period between now and 5 to 10 years time, although the HSC plan itself may be for a shorter (3 - 5 year) time span. The HSC has asked that the forward look be completed by the end of January 2003 and should be a product of the Committee and not of the Secretariat.

## **Argument**

5 At ACTS's July 2002 meeting, members used their expertise to try and identify emerging issues in the future. Secretariat was tasked to summarise the presentations and discussions and forward it to members in the form of bullet points. Members were asked to use this summary to consult their networks and establish if others shared their views or had a different point of view. Feedback from members is set out at Annex 1. Secretariat has prepared a redrafted forward look at Annex 2.

## **Communication Plan**

6 Following ACTS's agreement of the revised forward look, Secretariat will prepare a paper that will be presented to the Health and Safety Commission at its 14 January 2003 meeting.

## **Evaluation Plan**

7 ACTS's advice to the HSC will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary by the committee.

## **Relevant Control Systems**

8 Not applicable.

## **Consultation**

9 Members were asked to consult their networks.

## **Presentation**

10 [Check with John Price, SASD]

## **Costs and Benefits**

11 HSE research funds to devote to this exercise are severely limited.

## **Environmental implications**

12 None.

## **European implications**

13 Issues with a European dimension are included in the forward look.

## **Devolution**

14 This forward look takes account of emerging issues that affect Great Britain as a whole.

## **Other implications**

15 None.

**Action**

ACTS members are asked to consider the recommendation at paragraph 3.

**Contact****ACTS Secretariat**

Tel: 020 7717 6184

Fax: 020 7717 6190

## Feedback from members on bullet point summary

Comments received from → ← This section is being withheld under Exemption 12 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information

- In 1<sup>st</sup> box, under heading 'Likely changes in short/medium/long term', at 5<sup>th</sup> bullet point, please say:

*"An industry representative considered that the REACH control of intermediates could result in few employed in UK (and EU) but the environmental representative suggested that this was by no means certain."*

- Immediately after, please add a bullet point:

*"Better data on the hazards posed by chemicals due to REACH."*

- In 2<sup>nd</sup> box, under heading 'What are the associated consequences for ACTS and H & S', under bullet point stating – 'Higher volume and number of chemicals in disparate businesses', add new bullet points:

*"In EU, future chemicals strategy may result in several old "existing chemicals" not being supported and therefore in short term less chemicals may be on the market."*

*"Markets for safer chemicals increase as REACH delivers a framework for the move away from older chemicals with bad hazard profiles."*

These comments have been included in the redrafted forward look at Annex 2.

**Revised tables of emerging issues**

<b>Change in the nature of chemical manufacturing</b>
<b>– What are likely to be the changes in the short/medium/long term?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift from production to selling solutions (e.g. move to final product, complete painted vehicle)</li> <li>• Global companies may no longer be engaging with CBI/CIA</li> <li>• Less corporate resource</li> <li>• Importance of EU and international markets</li> <li>• An industry representative considered that the REACH control of intermediaries could result in few employed in the UK (and the EU) but the environmental representative suggested that this was by no means certain</li> <li>• EU enlargement impact on competition</li> <li>• Increasingly global business</li> <li>• Tensions between countries that are users and those that are producers</li> <li>• Better data on the hazards posed by chemicals due to REACH</li> </ul>
<b>– What are the associated consequences for ACTS and H &amp; S?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of environmental concerns move to ban products</li> <li>• Safety of substitutes (e.g. for silica, mutagens)</li> <li>• Increased mechanisation/less worker exposure (production costs)</li> <li>• Reduction in product shelf life for formulated products</li> <li>• Increased interest in nanoparticles</li> <li>• User specification shift H&amp;S responsibilities</li> <li>• Environmental economics</li> <li>• Higher volume and number of chemicals in disparate businesses</li> <li>• In EU, future chemicals strategy may result in several old “existing chemicals” not being supported and therefore in short term less chemicals may be on the market</li> <li>• Markets for safer chemicals increase as REACH delivers a framework for the move away from older chemicals with bad hazard profiles</li> <li>• More formulations in the workplace more difficult to assess risks</li> <li>• Demographics.</li> <li>• More women in the workforce</li> <li>• Increased unacceptability of individual risk</li> </ul>
<b>– What are the technological changes likely to be?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulk chemical manufacture subject to small incremental change in next 5 years</li> <li>• New technology represents risks to researchers</li> <li>• Possible increase in surfactants</li> </ul>

<b>The nature of the supply chain</b>	
–	<p><b>What does the supply chain look like at the moment?</b></p> <p>[To explore this issue, the syndicate discussion group looked at the production, distribution and use of dichloromethane.]</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedstocks and raw material produced in bulk by large, capital intensive operations. Production likely to be relatively well controlled.</li> <li>• Formulation of marketed product also likely to be relatively well controlled.</li> <li>• Each of the different stages of the process can be distributed throughout the globe.</li> <li>• Moving down the supply chain from bulk production, through to end use, increasingly harder to identify involved parties.</li> <li>• End users may use product for a variety of individual uses not anticipated by manufacturer/supplier nor covered in safety data sheets.</li> </ul>
–	<p><b>How will it change?</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More international competition.</li> <li>• Large companies are breaking up (less vertical integration).</li> <li>• More movement of chemicals around the globe (e.g. in response to labour costs)</li> <li>• People at risk will increasingly have access to products that are generic (e.g. a store's own version of leading brand of paint stripper). Users need to be aware of the potentially harmful nature of the product's constituent ingredients, rather than a product's proprietary or generic name.</li> <li>• Need to address the lack of knowledge in the supply chain.</li> <li>• Cannot assume that there is in built responsibility in the supply chain, or where it exists, that the system works properly.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of self-employed.</li> <li>• Increase in domestic use of products.</li> </ul>
–	<p><b>What will be the associated consequences for ACTS and H &amp; S?</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for research to increase understanding of the supply chain.</li> <li>• The need to make interventions through non-regulatory intermediaries.</li> <li>• Accept the prevailing mixed soup of chemical users.</li> </ul>

<b>Change in the nature of chemical users</b>
<p>– <b>Background thoughts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the major changes anticipated in the chemical industry have already taken place.</li> <li>• Currently, the chemical industry is in a period of consolidation.</li> <li>• Overall numbers of persons exposed to harm in industry is declining.</li> <li>• Environmentally driven exclusion of some chemicals will result in the introduction of new chemicals, which could expose workers to new risks.</li> </ul>
<p>– <b>What will be the change in nature of chemical users in the short/medium/long term?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling (fridges, hospital equipment) and biotechnological developments are possible areas of concern.</li> <li>• Overall a movement towards the service industries and users who have not up until now been considered at risk.</li> <li>• Included are workers in florists, plumbers, leisure centres, shopping malls, and beauty parlours.</li> <li>• Movement to offer multiple services under one roof i.e. dry cleaning in supermarkets.</li> <li>• Peripatetic workers, maintenance people, home workers, those contracted out and operating as one-person businesses. (People like these have not as yet been monitored and as a consequence the current exposure data is zero).</li> <li>• Diversity agenda and rehabilitation is likely to introduce workers who might previously have been considered unfit to work – perhaps with respiratory problems or overall more susceptible to exposure.</li> <li>• Current exposure data tends towards measuring effects on healthy young men or pregnant women which does not reflect the predominance of women in the service industry or take disabled or more vulnerable workers into account.</li> <li>• Patterns of work changing dramatically away from a stable fixed workforce into a mobile workforce in short term contracts with consequential monitoring problems.</li> <li>• Examination of service industry work environments may reveal issues such as toxic products and mildews in what may previously have been thought to be ‘no risk’ environments.</li> <li>• Greater use of chemicals in the home with women being subject to greater exposure than men.</li> </ul>
<p>– <b>What will be the associated consequences for ACTS and H &amp; S?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer examination of substances, which may cause ill health in the service industries with a clear agenda of prevention rather than reaction.</li> <li>• Emphasis required on the need for the NHS to be a full partner in any programme of work.</li> </ul>

<b>Development of the regulatory system</b>
– <b>At national level, in the short/medium/long term?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of usage is moving towards smaller.</li> <li>• Current system relies on setting OELs based on evidence. This is no longer as effective because of fragmentation/trend towards 'smaller'</li> </ul>
– <b>At European level, in the short/medium/long term?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU needs to be more joined up on the way it regulates on chemicals. DG Environment, DG Enterprise and DG Employment and Social Affairs do not coordinate as well as they should.</li> <li>• Occupational health implications of REACH (registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals)</li> </ul>
– <b>At global level, in the short/medium/long term?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalisation will increase.</li> <li>• The tensions between developed and developing countries will increase.</li> </ul>
– <b>What will be the associated consequences for ACTS and H &amp; S?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for more industry/sector good practice guidance (emphasis on control measures rather than OELs).</li> <li>• Must not be too narrow. Need to look at process-generated substances as well as supplied products.</li> </ul>